132 take the corrugated iron roofs off urban houses. Most tornadoes do not hit the ground, but if they do there is destruction. Usually such a cyclone precedes a heavy rainstorm.

The fog in the rainy season, called "gum", is cold and thick and covers the countryside. On the other hand, the fog that precedes the light rains of April and May, called gag or tegag, is milky, light, and causes very humid heat. Metereologists believe that it is the result of the sand raised by the hot "simoun" wind blowing from Arabia and the eastern lowlands of Ethiopia.

821 The importance of "rain in season" is of course an urgent concern of people living in a primarily agricultural economy. An unseasonal fall, which occasionally arrives after the end of the rainy season, when the grown grain begins to ripen, is called sabbiya, and is highly unpopular. The proverb, to indicate "all things in their proper time", refers to seasonal rains:

"In (the month of) Hamlē, beating-down rain;
in (the month of) Sānyē, fine drizzle."

At the beginning of the rainy season, in Sanye, the farmer wishes for constant drizzle, wetting the ground just enough to enable him to make headway with his scratch-plow and to seed in the previously sunbaked soil; in Hamlē, he wishes for plentiful rain so that the sprouting grain will grow fast and tall.

132 The Abyssinians themselves long ago recognized three dis-
137 tinct climatic zones in their country:
241

132 Dega - more than 8,000 feet above sea level; cold, with
137 average temperatures of 50° - 61° F. The dega
241 is primarily prairie grassland, strewn with many medium-sized wooded areas of the high mountain type. The area is particularly adapted for raising livestock, but also suitable for growing barley, wheat, tieff (a variety of millet), beans flax, and temperate fruit, which are gathered wild not long after the end of the rains. Trees include the wild olive (Olea chrysophylla), juniper (Juniperus procera), the medicinal Kosso tree (Hegenia abyssinica).

Woyna Dega - between 6,000 and 8,000 feet: temperate to warm, with average temperatures of 61° - 68° F. This climatic zone includes the greater part of the plateau country, and most of the populated and cultivated lands. This is the zone where most cereals are grown, including soft grains, barley, tieff, maize. Here coffee grows wild. Forests, where they occur, are thicker, but spiny bushes are more prevalent. At the lower levels there are thick stands of bamboo (Podocarpus) and East African hardwoods; at the higher levels are juniper varieties. Most Amhara live in this zone.

[361]

132 Qolla - below 5,000 feet: hot. with average temperatures
137 in the 70's, 80's and 90's F. The qolla includes the arid lowland zones, as well as tropical forest; river valleys like that of the Awash; and most border areas of the country.

134 carried down the Blue Nile into Egypt. In Ethiopia, irrigation canals make use of it.

[311] (3) The remaining, eroded, red loam soil, of little fertility. This is left to the bush or is used for grazing.[5]

135 There is little information on the mineral wealth of Ethiopia, since whatever there is, particularly gold, has been kept from the knowledge of outsiders. The Italians had merely begun their surveys when they had to leave the country. Salt has always been a major item of import from the border lowlands in the east to the highland plateau. Numerous volcanic mineral springs, used for healing since ancient times, exist in many plateau districts.

[326] Since ancient times, gold from the sand gravels of Wollega and southern provinces was sold in small nuggets, or fashioned by goldsmiths into rings and sold by weight. It is now a monopoly of the central government; goldsmiths have been drawn to Addis Ababa, where they now use modern methods.

D. Flora, Fauna, their significance in Ethiopian Ecology.

137 The generosity of nature on the highland plateau has provided a basis for human subsistence with little effort. In addition to a healthful climate and fertile soil, resources of vegetation and animal life are abundant.

137 Economic botanists have conducted studies which indicate
241 that the highlands of Ethiopia contain a number of indigenous varieties of cultivated cereals and legumes. Some are of the opinion that these highlands even formed one of the PRIMARY

5. Chamber of Commerce of Addis Ababa: Guidebook of Ethiopia, 1954, p. 127-8.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

137 centers of old world agriculture in which the Neolithic
241 economy originated, possibly contributing to the initial development of ancient Egyptian civilization. Like the highlands of Yemen, the highlands of Ethiopia seem to represent ancient centers of TERRACED AGRICULTURE. It was in the Kaffa province of Ethiopia that coffee originated. It was carried to Yemen, planted there, and exported from coastal harbors (like the town of Mocha) through the Red
439 Sea into the Mediterranean. Coffee is still Ethiopia's most important export. Other major exports include sundried hides, sheep and goat skins, cereals, edible oils, and gold.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that major imports consist primarily of items not of major importance in subsistence, but which reflect secondary needs: cotton sheeting (abujedid), cotton yarn, cotton piece goods, raw cotton, naphtha. The major exception is salt, still a major import.[6]

137 Many varieties of wild fruit and vegetables are eaten
262 only in small quantities, especially by the Amhara, partly because of the abundance of cereal crops and legumes, partly because of a cultural attitude that despises "wild food" fit for use only in case of crop failure, famine due to warfare, and for outcasts.

Another group of highly useful plants which grow wild in Ethiopia are the oilseeds. A number of these are planted and used in the diet.

137 In the lower regions of the plateau, mainly south of
241 the Amhara area, a "false banana" fiber crop called <u>muz</u> or
248

6. US Dept. of Commerce: "Ethiopia", OIT Vol.2, No12, May 1947, 4pp.

137 241 [248] koba (Musa ensete) is grown. This is used for making ropes of all kinds and bags for grain. In the south, the roots and inner parts of the plant are also used to make flour for food; but the Amhara despise this, considering it "food of slave peoples". 262 [186]

137 Vegetation is dense in the valleys, and the forests contain many valuable trees, including the Natal yellow pine. But in spite of the high yearly rainfall the northern plateau is comparatively little wooded. Foresters estimate that only 2.8% of Ethiopia is forest-covered, although they believe that it was once well forested. They ascribe this denuding to centuries of uncontrolled grazing and periodic burning-over. The best hardwoods that remain are usually in the least accessible spots, lowlands and gorges.[7]

137 313 The two most important trees of the highlands are the Ted and the Zegba. The Ted, a juniper (Juniperus procera) sometimes referred to as "pencil cedar" (or Juniperus phoenicoea), is fine-grained, easy to split, aromatic, durable (even when exposed to moist conditions in the rainy season), and termite-resistant. It is popular for beams in the better houses of chiefs, and for the simple native furniture. The Zegba(Podocarpus gracilor), also an evergreen, is found in the warmer parts of the plateau. The wood is soft, easy to split, subject to decay when exposed to moisture, and thus more popular in drier areas. Non-resinous and tasteless, it is useful as a container for food, but is mainly used for construction and furniture. On the higher plateau

7. Chamber of Commerce of Addis Ababa: Guidebook of Ethiopia 1954, pp. 127-8; Huo: Ethiopia, 1955, p.1-2; Simmons:Global Epidemiology, 1951, p.63.

136 Jackal ("qäbbäro"), common north of Lake Tana, near Gondar and in most other parts of Ethiopia. Its nocturnal habits are similar to those of the hyena, and it also burrows into graves.

Vultures ("amora"), This term includes all carrion-eating birds, and other birds of prey. Among Carrion-eaters are: the ever-present, sharp-eyed fork-tailed hawk ("ṭenb amora") which will swoop down and steal meat away from a man in the middle of the town if he is not quick to protect it; a white-bodied water-bird (näch amora) (including the "shemäla", a kind of heron) who competes with fishermen in the rainy season; "warda", the blackbird (merle) that cleans up after human feasts.

Crow ("qura"), named after its cry. This bird is most often seen in back yards or cleaning up the market area after a market day. Thus, a day when no market takes place, is called "Day of the Crow's market" ("yäqura gäbäya"). Pious individuals remember the crow as one of Noah's pets and call a variety that has a white spot on its head, "Noah's crow" (yänoa qura).

[125]

136 241 A third category of wild animals includes those that endanger the crops. The farmer sends his children to watch for these from the tops of umbrella trees, and the boys use their fiber-and-pebble slingshots against them. These include:

Baboon ("zendjäro"), very unpopular because a troop can

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destroy the crops of a village in a week. Shouting is not sufficient to scare them off when there are many. When the small baboon families held off by the boys threaten to grow into a troop, farmers use their rifles.

Hare ("tenchäl") is also called the "enemy of tïff" because it likes to feed on that main crop of the farmer. It is a nocturnal animal, perhaps because of its natural enemies, the ever-present birds of prey.

Yellow Sparrow ("mänäkusit"), lit. "little monk", be-
712 cause its yellow coloring resembles the saffron toga formerly worn by monks.

Flax snake ("yätalba ebäb") is of the light-brown color of flax-seed, on which it likes to feed. It is also called "furfafeya", because when disturbed, it makes a sound like "fuff". Its bite is con-
825 sidered mildly poisonous by the Amhara but requiring the services of a native "wogäsha" (surgeon), who thus acquires a reputation for his "cure" against this actually non-poisonous snake.

Locust (anbäta), occurs less often than the other dangers, but when it comes, in huge swarms of a 3-inch species, the results are devastating, causing major famines. (The usual route of the locust is arrival from the lowland eastern border, through the Great Rift valley (Awash), up the plateau, in January, just after the main harvest. It withdraws to the dry lowlands for egg-

136 laying during the little and big rains. But
●241 there are many variations.) When it comes, the farmer tries to scare it away by setting fire to fallow fields, stubble, bush and trees.

136 Other wild creatures familiar to the Amhara are Migrating birds which fly north (to "Jerusalem" in the popular mind, actually to Europe) in March and return in October, including the "zorit", a white-bellied, black-backed, red-winged bird, and a variety of stork, called "asa leqami". The Nile Monitor, ("ardjano"), a huge lizard is found along larger rivers, often not far from villages and even towns, and easy to hunt. With its scaly skin and often large size, it resembles a crocodile, with dark stripes and spots on a very white underside.
241 The skin is used to cover better utensils and is exported as "crocodile leather" for bags and shoes. Actual crocodiles are much harder to hunt, in less accessible river gorges in the lowlands. The Guenon Monkey (Tota) is common on lower
231 elevations(where it is also a danger to crops). Its young are sometimes made pets.

136 Insect life is abundant in Ethiopia, varies in type according to elevation, and bears considerable significance to ecology.

136 Flies - abundant everywhere, transmitting intestinal
1.4 and skin infections. They are not interfered with beyond swishing with the fly-switch which, if kept in constant motion, chases but does not kill them.

Fleas ("qunechcha") are very common on humans. Everyone has them most of the time, even in the city.

136 "meset", small white termite which eats wood.

Flying beetles: "enzezza" (onomatopoetic) resembled big bee, eats holes into wooden beams of houses, does not live in colonies. It makes honey which is despised as "wild" by the Amhara, but zar spirits are believed fond of it, especially in the bush. A greenish variety, "tenzizza", the cockchafer, makes no honey, and is eaten by chickens.

[776 237]

Scorpion ("gint"), though mainly a lowland animal, is found also in river valleys on the plateau. It is considered very poisonous especially to cows who swallow it while grazing and are said to die from it. Brown, finger-length, it hides under rocks. Its sting must be "pulled from the wound", in Amhara practice.

[752]

Wild rodents abound in rural areas, and rats which harbor fleas are common along trade routes. They are also a danger to crops, and one of the reasons why threshed grain is stored in the living-hut, in huge, mud-hardened grain bins.

[24 25]

13 The ecological provinces of Ethiopia can be summarized as follows:

(1) Alpine, high-plateau type.

(2) Forests rich in fauna, and mountain savanna.

(3) Desert or near-desert savanna in lowlands, with belts of tropical forest along the rivers.

231 556 Domestication of animals, as mentioned before, is very old in Ethiopia. To this day, the wealth even of long-settled Amhara peasants is judged according to the number of

231 livestock he own, and he prefers to keep it or dole it out
[556] to his children on their marriages, rather than sell it. Practically everyone has a few sheep and goats, possibly also a donkey and a horse, and, if richer, a mule, some cows and a team of two oxen.

The cattle population of Ethiopia is estimated at 18 million, or 1.2 head per person, comparable with New Zealand and Argentina.[11] However, an estimated million or more cattle die each year of rinderpest, anthrax, tick fever, etc. This limits the exportation of meat surplus almost as much as does difficulty of transportation to world markets.

412 According to the United Nations estimate, Ethiopia in
494 1950-1951 had 1 million horses, 1 million mules, 3 million donkeys. These provide the bulk of transportation, except for the few hundred heavy trucks (trente-quatros) which
491 operate on the few Italian-built roads. This modern road network has been badly damaged by the annual rains, by the overloading of trucks, and by inadequate (though improving) repairs.

241 The estimated agricultural production of Ethiopia in
433 1954 included:

Maize - 150,000 metric tons,
Barley - 600,000 metric tons,
Linseed - 50,000 metric tons,
Coffee - 45,800 metric tons, [12]

11. KuO, 1955, 4pp.
12. U. N. Secretariat, Statistical Office: Statistical Yearbook 1955, tables 29, 14, 15, 20, 25.

goose "yebra" (anas aegyptiaca).

825
223 Quail - "derchet" Perhaps the most common wild fowl very near habitations, but rarely hunted because very small. It is considered a nuisance and a danger because of its habit of hiding in flocks in the tall grass and starting up suddenly, scaring horses and even mules, which is dangerous especially on steep hills. 59

411
184 Spears, slingshot, and now rifles are used in part-time or sport hunting. Traps ("atmēd") and snares are used only by occupational hunting populations living in jungles such as Wolqait and whose pattern of living differs from that of typical Amhara.

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[412] A noteworthy Amhara exploitative activity is the collecting of pumice rock in riverbeds during the dry season, and thus called "yābahēr dengay" (river rock). It is used
135 in grinding and husking. Gold comes mostly from south of old-Amhara territory, where it is found in sand gravels and has been sold in nuggets since ancient times.

● 241 D. Food Production and Consumption

a.) Agricultural production

In agriculture in general, there are two major variables: environment, and degree of sophistication - i.e. power and its application.

The ecology of Ethiopia's highland plateau, where

59. The English equivalent terms have been taken from Van Rosen, Bjorn: Game Animals of Ethiopia. 1953.

244 topography provides for a variety of climate at a minimum of distance, is very favorable to diversified agriculture. But, as indicated before, the uses of power have not developed in millenia. Much land is permitted to lie fallow, and slash-and-burn methods are used when old soil becomes exhausted and new lands are needed. Therefore, apart from market villages, no settlements remain on the same spot for as much as a century, usually. The fields are not fertilized; manure from cattle is used as fuel. However, irrigation, though not intensive; terrace farming since ancient times; and the use of a wooden scratch plow with iron tip, give the Amhara agricultural picture an old-Middle Eastern character. Also Middle Eastern is the fact that among the Amhara and other north Abyssinians cereals are the most important field crops.

Ninety-five percent of the population of Ethiopia [134] depends on farming and stock raising.[60] European estimates indicate that half the land territory of Ethiopia is arable. Despite much erosion, the depth of the subsoil is regarded [311] as unusually deep. But much good land is left fallow, because there is enough land for the low density of the population; and because life is fairly comfortable at the old standards of living, especially now that ravaging armies of hungry soldiers seem a thing of the past. Thus, there is little urge for increased production, except by proclamation from the central authority from Addis Ababa which has tried to stimulate it with only modest success. The reason for this lack of success is that the farmer argues, with

60. Underhill, C.T.: Industry in Ethiopia,1950, p. 21.

24/ considerable justification, that even if he raised larger and more diversified crops, they would not find a ready sale (due to undeveloped lines of transport to world markets). Thus the old pattern of not raising more crops than one's family can consume in one year, and for taxes and tribute, continues, especially among the Amhara; consequently fields do not become exhausted as quickly as they would in intensive agriculture.

[427] Another factor was (and is to some extent) the insecurity of tenure. The sharecropping "gabbar" was little more than a serf, who did not know from year to year what treatment he would receive from the next (often absentee) feudal landlord to whom his land might be assigned the next year. This was not conducive to the growth of much sentimental attachment to any particular plot of soil.

[311] Among the Amhara, only about 20% of the potentially fertile area available in a neighborhood ("and debber agär") is usually under cultivation in any one year. On exposed parts of the plateau the crops are usually barley, broad beans, some bearded wheat, and linseed. In more sheltered spots, lentils, chick peas, and a legume called "gwayo" used as cattle fodder (but feared by Amhara because walking in it or lying in it is supposed to cause softening of the human bones). Barley is planted almost the whole year round, starting early with the "light rains", and irrigated in the dry season. In valleys of the plateau, where fields are warmer and more protected, as well as better watered, the major crop of tiëff, a grass-like

241 cereal, as well as other crops already mentioned are grown. The lowest and warmest spots of the plateau are usually used for various types of millet-sorghum, gesho (hops). Coffee grows wild or is purchased on the market, as are bananas from the lowland. After a few years of cultivation, a field may be left fallow for five or more years.

[17] [42] [231] The Amhara's irrigation and terrace farming resemble those of Yemen, not of Africa. Farming is man's work, not woman's. The one-handed plow is drawn by a yoke of two oxen, encouraged by a long fibre whip. The Amhara rerely uses other animals for drawing the plow.

Fallow land or new bush is broken during the dry season. A heavier-than-usual iron plow point is purchased from the Falasha ironsmiths, affixed to the scratch plow, and the area, after preliminary burning, is scratched many times at right angles. The stubble and weeds are then piled and burned. But for the actual plowing and seeding, the beginning of the rains is awaited.

312 Irrigation canals are completely washed out in the rainy season, and must be rebuilt in each dry season. Terracing is less common than irrigation, but on occasion mountain farmers of long residence do build low walls of rock and mud on hillsides to prevent severe washouts and landslides during the rainy season.

243 Tyëff (Eragrostic abyssinica; Poa abyssinica) deserves the latter Latin name, for it is the mainstay staple of Abyssinia, except in the south. It is an annual indigenous grass with seeds of pinhead size, cultivated

000 make a toga.

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241 Since agriculture is a major concern, much of the annual cycle of activities is centered around it. With the onset of the light rains, fields left fallow the years before are redistributed among the members of the extended family of those who work the land. Fathers allocate fields to their newly married sons or to those who have an added child. The matted grass is plowed before the rains start--"tärättära"--plowing to kill the weeds in the sun; then a second, third, fourth time at right angles--"gämmäsä", "däggämä", "sälläsä". Then the turf is piled, dried and burned. The land is now ready, "masa" land", and when puffy clouds appear over the horizon in the morning, the farmer takes his plow to the field for rains will surely follow in the afternoon.

241
407 The plow is one-handed, derived from the ancient Middle East. The yoke, about 5 feet in length and 3-4" thick ("qämbär") is lowered behind the humps of two oxen. The plowpoint, held in place by two vertical wedges, is attached to the central stick, "manäqo". At first this plow, which is little more than a converted digging stick dragged at an angle, penetrates less then 6 inches, but after about 5 replowings, as deeply as one foot. The plowpoint is flat and cannot turn the earth.

241 Major procedures fall into the following categories:

preliminary plowing - "tällämä", cutting field into furrows, preparatory to seeding. Plow is led around large rocks and ignores small ones, so that

●241

very few need to be removed by hand; "fär" is the first furrow in a field.

deep plowing - "shärakkätä", in order to raise good soil.

final plowing - "zärrä", just before or after seeding.

134 823 Numerous distinctions are made between types of soil, so that every member of the extended family receives his share of both good or poor soil. Fertility is basically categorized into the aforementioned "läm tyëff" and "tyëff" types. Finer distinctions show awareness of conservation needs:

male soil ("wändë märët") - any heavy, humus-rich, fertile soil.

female soil ("syëtë märët") - any light, especially sandy soil. Less fertile.

dark soil - "walka", used for luxury grain such as wheat.

sandy soil - "mwaçhçhärä", must be lightly plowed so as not to blow away.

mobile soil - "lel märët", easily eroded, often left fallow for that reason.

poorly draining soil - "rankwa märët", or "ambaza", gets muddy easily and then becomes difficult to plow.

eroded land - "borbor märët", with many crevasses, "eaten by water" during the rainy season.

243 patient oxen. If the farmer has no ex-slave retainers, his wife may help in the harvest. Even young boys help, particularly in protecting crops. The direction of the breeze [461] is carefully observed before winnowing. Work proceeds from sunrise to sundown (from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M.), with a rest from noon to 3 P.M., the hottest time of the day. At that [263] time the women bring barley beer, enjara bread, and a special condiment prepared from crushed "nug" oilseeds called "anäbabär".

Threshing by sticks instead of oxen is done in harvest of the "nug" and this may require some additional helpers.

241 Oil plants are cultivated and of considerable impor-
262 tance in the diet. They are considered field crops rather than garden crops:

"nug" (Guizotia abyssinica), the black Niger Seed, which is the most used vegetable oil of the Amhara. Travellers take it along, mixed with spices, as a staple. It is used in many items of diet. After crushing, the oil cakes are used for fuel (not fodder).

Flax seed (Linum usitatissimum), called "talbä", the second most common oilseed, of light brown color, consumed in similar ways and in drinks. It is not raised for the fiber, which is considered fodder or fuel.

Castor bean (Ricinus communis), called "gulgwas" or "qachma". This is not a field crop as much as nug and talba, and not as much of a staple. Tan- [281] ners use it for lubrication of skins. The emperor has urged increased production, but there

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262 are no ready markets.

Sesame seed (Sesamum indicum) called "selit", is rather rare, and, as the name indicates, not originally native to Abyssinia. The Amhara, finding it difficult to grow, consider it an expensive and delicious delicacy, and consume the oil only as a rare treat.

Sunflower seed (Heliantus annuus), called "sur" is not a field crop, only occasionally planted, often semi-wild.

244 Vegetables are considered garden crops, and are planted near the hamlet on the hillside, while field crops are in the valley and river flood plains. Apart from kitchen gardens, which are considered necessities because of the spices that are consumed daily, other vegetables, particularly cabbage (goman) are despised as poor food (food of p poor people or in times of famine). Consequently the Amhara raises few vegetables and small quantities.

Cabbage (goman), and a white variety, "aydärgē", resistant to climatic change.

252 Chick-Peas, "shembera" (Cicer arietum), the most common, generally eaten roasted, but also boiled in the lenten season, and baked into bread to stretch tyeff in case of crop failure. Shembera is the proverbial staple, even in war and famine, never expected to fail. The proverb says:

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539 "She who has not born, will never carry her load;

285 Other fiberwork and basketry include: a large bas-
415 ket of withes, "qerchat", used to measure 25 kilos of pin-head-grained tyeff; a table made of split bamboo ("qerqa-ha"), or of a variety of reeds ("säbäz", "geramta", "akär-ma"); baskets to carry dry food)"akofada") made by shep-herding boys and girls; baskets to carry soggy stew, covered by morocco-type tanned leather by the faqi specialists, with straps holding the lid tight ("agälgel"); little grain baskets ("qulbit"); and the even smaller dowry basket ("mu-day") in which the bride carries her personal spinning equipment and little materials for adornment and ornament, often itself ornamented with dyed reeds; plaited straw baskets, very tightly woved and used as milking pots("qwacha")

285 There is also a purely ornamental fiber plate, en-
[531] tirely flat, with interwoven ornamentally dyed reeds, mostly in ring patterns and star designs. These are hung on the inner wall of the tuqul, probably in imitation of the interior decoration of the feudal "great man" 's house.

285 Young boys learn to make a slingshot ("wänchär")
411 of a strong fiber ("nacha"). When completed, it has a
857 loop on one end to hook over a finger. A pebble is placed in the protruding and flat center; then the slingshot is swung several times around the head and the loose end released at just the right speed and direction. It can
[244] stun a baboon and thus chase the band threatening the crops, or frighten off birds.

439 Some imported tools and utensils, have reached the
412 Amhara, but remained trade good. One was the straight razor, "arab melach", bought from Arabs as the name indicated,

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

tunity for geographical observation. The vegetation was really fantastic. Along the higher slopes of Choké giant red-hot pokers stretched for miles.[1] Rather lower the ground was carpeted with violets and beautiful mosses. There were bushes of heather growing higher than the height of a man, and a variety of lichens. In the silence of the mountains in the early morning mists, the atmosphere strangely recalled parts of Ireland or the North Cornish coast. It was a fitting background for the magical beliefs and the immaterial psyche of the Ethiopians, which the more matter-of-fact European finds difficult to comprehend.

It was interesting to note that at about 11,000 feet there appeared to be a sort of fly-line. The flies, which are a constant pest round Debra Markos at 9000 feet, entirely disappeared and only appeared again on the incline down to Mota and the Blue Nile.

There were only two or three villages along the track,[2] which of course is a new one, but collections of huts were fairly frequent over the lower slopes, particularly on the incline to the Blue Nile. Cultivation was maintained up to about 12,000 feet. I gather from a book on the Heights of Simen (to the north-east of the Gondar area) that there is a flourishing farming life at the same altitudes in that region. Grazing was magnificent and live stock were notably well conditioned by comparison with the animals of the Debra Markos district.

Colonel Boustead's force continued from Mota to Bahrdar at the southern tip of Lake Tana, where they made contact with the small mixed group of Abyssinians, Sudanese, and British under Major Simmonds. The march was continued in the direction of Debra Tabor, the former capital of Ras Gugsa Wolye, which the Italians had made into a major defended locality—the base for a line of dependent forts strung out along the road which linked Dessie on the Strada Imperiale with Gondar. Conditions remained difficult at an altitude of over 9000 feet in the first weeks of the so-called Little Rains which break in May.

Meanwhile a force of one company of Sudanese and one company of a newly formed Ethiopian battalion with a few British officers and N.C.Os. under Colonel Wingate, O/C Gojjam Force, was following the retreating garrison of Debra Markos. About eight thousand of these had survived the operations in Gojjam and they had retired across the Blue Nile, blowing up the Shafartak bridge, and were making for Magdala and Debra Tabor across the mountains which lie to the east of the Blue Nile and to the north of the main road from Debra Markos to Addis Ababa. Harassing operations were kept up throughout the month of May and, when two thousand of Ras Kassa's Shoans joined in, Colonel Wingate was strong enough to bring the enemy to a general action. The affair was decided when Bimbashi Thesiger, by a remarkable 50-mile march in twenty-four hours over hostile country, seized a panhandle connecting two plateaux along which the Italians were intending to retreat. As a result the remnants of the fifty-one enemy battalions stationed in the Gojjam surrendered at Agibar, about four months after the Emperor had set up his original headquarters at Belaia.

All this country on the marches of the ancient kingdoms of Shoa and Amhara was relatively little known before the Italian occupation. I refer to

[1] Loc., in the Choké Mountains. —Analyst

[2] Loc., between Debra Markos and Mota. —Ana

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

of running water, and appeal to such *Dei ex machina* as marine action and waves of translation, cannot see a few such marks of the handiwork of rain and rivers as are shown by these gorges. There is not the slightest possibility, as far as I can see, of explaining their origin by any other force than that of the streams flowing in them. Any faulting or dislocation of the rocks is out of the question, there is no evidence of glacier action at any past time, and even the most fervent apostle of marine denudation would scarcely credit it with the formation of a Titanic trench three-quarters of a mile deep and very little more in breadth."

This description would apply equally to the gorges found in other parts of the Ethiopian highlands, for they are all, as far as I have seen, remarkably similar; and no geologist would now question their formation by stream erosion.

The formations of Blanford's area were called by him the Magdala group of "Traps"—an enormously thick, practically horizontal layer of lava flows. They were especially characterized by bands of trachyte, often columnar, weathering to form steep scarps. These formations are probably of late- or post-Cretaceous age, since Blanford's Ashangi Traps (upon which the Magdala group lies unconformably) were tentatively attributed by him to the Upper Cretaceous. Referring to the Magdala Traps Blanford says: "It is highly probable that the Trap rocks of Shoa belong, in part at least, to this group", his belief being based on some descriptions of Rocher d'Hericourt, who travelled in Shoa in the 1840's. My own limited observations confirm this assumption, except that in our area the most conspicuous cliffs and scarps consisted of columnar basalt, not trachyte. The area shown on the map consists of alternating harder and softer layers of volcanic rocks, including basalts, trachytes and tuffs (the latter often used, as in Kenya, for building). They dip slightly to the north-west.

The plateau, which occupies most of the sheet, lies everywhere above 9000 feet. It enjoys a temperate climate, and frosts are not uncommon in December and January. It is swept by easterly winds throughout the year, except when rain is actually threatened or falling, when it commonly turns right round to the west—a frequent occurrence during the long rainy season (June to September). The volcanic rocks have given rise to deep and potentially very fertile soils. The high plateau is mostly short grassland with very little bush, except in places protected both from wind and grazing animals, and very few trees except for small clumps of introduced Eucalyptus which mark almost every inhabited place. Owing to the scarcity of timber a dung-fuel known as *kubat* is usually burnt. At first sight the plateau appears very thinly populated but this, as will be shown, is an illusion. Anything like a village is rare, but isolated homesteads occur almost everywhere on rising ground. Nearly all this country makes good grazing for cattle, sheep and goats, and it is high enough for horses to flourish. Perhaps a third of it is more or less cultivable, though the area under cultivation in any one year is much less. Owing to cold and exposure very few crops flourish on the plateau itself, the principal ones being barley and broad beans.

The natural flora of the high plateau is not rich, though in rocky, sheltered spots a succession of attractive herbs and shrubs, including Jasmine, a yellow

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

These figures show that the gorges, together with the adjoining and intervening plateau, carry a considerably higher population than the rest of the plateau, the combined average being over 200 per square mile. The figures for population per church are also interesting. The gorges and the adjacent parts of the plateau contain no fewer than thirteen churches and they serve an average population of only some 650 souls each. On the other hand the churches of the general plateau, not counting those of Debra Berhan, which chiefly serve the townspeople, number only four. They must cater for about three times as many people each, and until recently many more for two of them are recent foundations.

The higher population of the gorge region is attributable to two causes: the greater productivity of the land there, and the historical fact, already referred to, that the Amharas were long forced to live in the gorges, and have re-emerged only in recent times. This is confirmed by the evidence of the churches which, in such numbers, are sure evidence of a long-established Christian population. The oldest ones are among those in the depths of the gorges; sites on the edges of gorges seem to be more recent. The few plateau churches are all relatively modern and bespeak the re-occupation by Amharas; two of them were indeed founded within the last fifteen years, and one as recently as 1945.

As can be seen from the map, sites chosen for dwellings are usually on the higher ground. The favourite sites, of which many examples can be seen on the sheet, are rocky ridges and the tops or upper slopes of hills and minor plateaus. A high place with an outlook, together with reasonable proximity to permanent water, seem to be the conditions sought after. Even the most elevated and exposed hill-tops are generally inhabited, whereas nobody tries to live on the plains near the main streams, which become very swampy in the rains. The ordinary family, together with its domestic animals, lives in a small, irregular cluster of round huts, which in this area are built of stone cemented with mud and carry a conical thatched roof. They are surrounded, as a rule, by a dry-stone wall, which may be shared by several households. Richer people may have an ornamental gatehouse at the main entry, with a little watchman's room over the gate; but such ostentation was not common.

Disregarding some of the Debra Berhan people, almost the entire population is engaged in farming which, here as elsewhere in Ethiopia, is the mainstay of existence. Some possess their own land; others hold their plots, in return for a proportion of the produce (but without any security of tenure), from absentee landowners. There is also a landless element, greatly increased through the disturbing influence of the Italian occupation, who hire themselves out as ploughmen and labourers. I had intended to measure some typical holdings in order to estimate the area actually required to support a family, but my time in the area was cut short and I never did so. As a very rough estimate I think that about 15–20 per cent. of the area is under cultivation in any one year, which would indicate an average per family of something like 4 acres. This does not include fallow land which, once re-grown with grass, cannot be distinguished at a glance from permanent pasture.

The most exposed parts of the plateau near Debra Berhan will grow two crops only, barley and broad beans, but a limited amount of wheat (a bearded

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

241 variety) and linseed is grown in most parts of it. Where more shelter exists lentils and chick-pea are also planted, and another low-growing leguminous crop called *gwayo*, which is used only as a cattle fodder as it is believed to cause softening of the bones in man! The barley is planted early and the other crops late in the main rainy season (June–September). Barley is sometimes also planted in the early rains, which are very uncertain here but usually begin in February or March. In this area however the early crop rarely gives a good return and sometimes fails completely. The plateau land, after being cultivated for a few years (often until it shows obvious signs of exhaustion), is fallowed for a period which varies widely according to the type of soil, but may be as long as five or seven years.

Down in the gorges, where the climate is appreciably milder, and where a primitive sort of irrigation can be practised on the level shelves, both chick-pea and lentils flourish. Some *teff* (a grass-like cereal greatly favoured for making the local bread) can be grown, as well as wheat and barley. Shelf cultivation seems as a rule to be continuous, perhaps because of the fresh sediment spread annually over the fields by rain and irrigation. In the lower parts of the gorges some maize and millet (*Sorghum*) can be found, but almost the whole of the area included on the map is too high for these crops. Other gorge products, unknown on the plateau, are tomatoes, chillies, coffee and *gesho*—a shrub whose leaves are used for fermenting the local beer (*talla*) and honey-wine (*tej*). Bananas, for no obvious reason, are not grown, but are brought to Debra Berhan market from the low country beyond the eastern escarpment.

The agricultural methods of the Ethiopians are far more advanced than those of any surrounding territory and do not belong to Africa. They can be paralleled among the west-Asian peasantry, and a close comparison with the methods of the Yemen mountain people might be especially fruitful. It was from this latter region that the Ethiopians' ancestors emigrated, before the Christian era, and it is extremely probable that they brought with them both implements and a knowledge of techniques. Hence perhaps the use of the plough, universal among highland Ethiopians, and their skill in irrigation and terracing.

Farming in Ethiopia is primarily the man's and not the woman's work, the standard female occupation, apart from household cares, being spinning. (Cotton is widely grown in the lowlands.) The farmers spend most of their lives at the plough, a one-handled variety drawn by a yoke of oxen. In their right hand they carry a whip with a short handle and long, heavy thong which they continually whirl and crack above the heads of the oxen, to whom, at the same time, they address an endless succession of strange howls and shouts, curses and imprecations. New or long-fallowed grassland is broken in with the plough in the dry season. This complicated process (known as *gai*) involves first scratching the ground in several directions to dislodge the turf, next gathering the sods into numerous heaps, then setting fire to these so that grass and weeds are gradually burnt out, and finally spreading out the soil again. But the great time for ploughing comes after the main rains have reduced the countryside to a sea of soft, dark mud. At this season the fields are peppered with ploughmen. Each successive sowing must be prepared

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

for, and, in the height of the rains when some crops are already up, deep furrows are made at regular intervals, and enlarged from time to time to carry away the surplus rain water.

Irrigation on the shelves of the gorges has already been referred to. But a more elaborate system, the extent of which is shown schematically on the map, has been developed along the river Beressa and its tributary the Maka, which both provide a small flow of water throughout the dry season. The whole enterprise is an interesting example of concerted effort and communal organization—in neither of which are the Amharas usually believed to excel. Its object is to ensure an early crop of barley, to be reaped before the onset of the main rains in June.

The irrigation system has to be partly rebuilt every dry season for the dams, which are constructed of stones and heavy sods, are swept away in the rains. From each dam the water is led off into a well-established furrow, which is carried down in a divergent line from the river and sometimes cut out of the rock on steep scarps. From it minor channels, which can be opened or blocked at will, branch off to irrigate the intervening lands. There are however more complicated systems; thus the dam near Dilila feeds two irrigation channels, one on either bank of the river. The right-bank channel receives its water direct from the dam, that on the left bank by means of an aqueduct carried across the main stream just below the dam and likewise constructed of stones and sods. The flow is not sufficient to feed both at once, so that the water is excluded from one or other branch on different days of the week; while if rain happens to fall the whole system is switched off. The left-bank channel, after running almost parallel to the Beressa for nearly a mile and a half, has to cross obstacles in the form of two tributary streams. The second tributary crossed is a large one, and the irrigation channel, in order to maintain its level, makes a big loop upstream and is then carried over the tributary by means of another wall-like aqueduct 8 or 10 feet high.

During the latter part of the dry season the brilliant green crops of the irrigated area make a striking contrast to the brown and withered aspect of the surrounding countryside. The district (known as Atakilt or "garden") takes its name from this characteristic feature. There are other minor irrigation schemes on the plateau, as on the Dalecha river in the east and the Angolala river in the west of the sheet, but nothing on so large a scale or so elaborately organized as the Beressa system. The Atakilt plains also have historic interest as the scene of the battle, already mentioned, which resulted in the emperor Theodore's annexation of Shoa and the capture of young Menelik.

To conclude this brief account of the agricultural techniques of our area something must be said of terracing and its effect on the landscape. Nothing like the impressive and elaborate terracing practised in some eastern rice-growing countries is attempted in these parts. Many slopes are nevertheless unobtrustively terraced, both in the gorges and on the plateau, and it is not uncommon to see new terraces in process of formation. A wall (*gur*) is built on the lower side of the area selected for improvement, advantage being often taken of any natural flattening of the hillside. The *gur* has a vertical face on

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

each of the years that I came there they gave me two quarters of the fattest cow that was killed. This flesh is distributed amongst the people who come to the Castar, and the friars have none because they do not eat meat. And these cows are all brought as offerings by their breeders in the district, who vow them to Philip. This monastery, and the others that are subject to it, have this rule in addition, that no females enter them, that is to say, neither women, nor she-mules, nor cows, nor hens, nor anything else that is female. And these cows which they kill are killed a long way from the wall, and when I came there they came to the distance of a cross-bow shot to take my mule, and they took her away to their farm of Jamgargara, where Mattheus died.

CAP. XV.—*Of the agriculture of this country, and how they preserve themselves from the wild beasts, and of the revenues of the monastery.*

The friars of this monastery, and of the other monasteries subject to it, might do good works by planting trees and vines, and making gardens and orchards for their exercise; and they do nothing. The country is ready to produce everything, as is seen from that which is uncultivated: they do not plant or grow anything except millet and bee-hives. When it is night, neither they nor anybody else go out from their houses from fear of the wild beasts that are in the country, and those who watch the millet have very high resting places upon the trees, in which they sleep at night. In the district of this monastery there are, in the valleys between the mountains, very large herds of cows, kept by Arab Moors, and there go with each herd forty or fifty Moors, with their wives and children: and their headman is

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

night. And if it is distant they say, you will arrive in a *sambete*, that is a week, and so they define it according to the distances. When I said that from Barua to Barra there were from three and a half up to four leagues, that was according to our opinion, and it would not be more. We afterwards travelled there many times, and we started from one town and dined at the other, and did our business and returned to the town we had started from by daylight. The people of the country reckon this as a day's journey, because they travel very slowly. Between these two towns there is very remarkable country, tilled fields of wheat, barley, millet, pulse, lentils, and all other sorts of vegetables which the country possesses unknown to us. From the road from one place to the other more than fifty towns are to be seen: I say large towns and very good ones, all on heights. In these plains and fields there are herds of wild cattle, forty or fifty in a herd. It is a chase that is very pleasant for the Portuguese, but the country people are able to do them little hurt, although they receive from them much injury to their crops.

CAP. XX.—*Of the town of Barua, and of the women and their traffic, and of the marriages which are made outside of the churches.*

This town of Barua in which we were staying, and where later we passed more time, may have three hundred hearths and more, a great part of them belonging to women, because this is like a court in many respects. One is that people of the Prester's court never go from here, and as many as come are not without wives. The other is because this is the residence and seat of the Barnagais, and there are continually in his house three hundred mounted men and upwards, and as many more who come every day for

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and men who sleep there to watch, from fear of the animals that roam about the villages all night: and if they did not keep this watch nothing alive would remain which they would not devour. The people who go to sow millet in the mountains of Bisan belong to this country and the neighbouring towns. The reason why they go and do it is this. Here there are very numerous grain crops of every kind and nature that can be mentioned, as I have already said; and because it is near to the sea, by which go all the provisions for Arabia, Mekkah, Zebid, Jiddah, and Toro,[1] and other parts; and they carry the provisions to the sea to sell them. And because in this country the winters are *divided into seasons*, and the seed crops do not grow except with the rains, they go to sow these millet fields at the mountain of Bisan, where it is winter in the months of February, March, and April. There is this same winter in a mountain called Lama, in this kingdom of the Barnagais, which is fully eight days' journey from the mountain of Bisan. In another country, which is named Doba, and which is quite a month's journey from this lordship of Lama, there is winter in these same months. As for these millet fields, they require rains, and as these winters happen out of season, they go and sow them where it rains, and so profit by both winters. In this town of Barua are two churches with many priests, one close to the other, one is for men, the other for women. The men's church is called St. Michael, that of the women is named after the apostles Peter and Paul. They say that a great lord, who was then Barnagais, built the men's church, and gave it the privilege that no woman should enter it, except only the wife of the Barnagais, with one damsel, whenever she went to take the communion, and even she does not now enter the church, but takes the communion at the door in the inner circuit with the laity, and so the

[1] Mount Sinai.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

643 735 There are many royal farms belonging to the Prester, in which a great quantity of bread is gathered, which is given to honourable persons, and the poor, and to poor monasteries and churches, without Prester John making any profit of the produce and revenue of these farms, but only alms.

241 In all the country there is much bread, wheat and barley; in other lands there is more millet than wheat or barley, in these, and where wheat and barley, there is much taff and dagusha (seeds not known to us), pulse, beans, pease, and all vegetables; and in other lands all sorts of grain and vegetables in great quantity and abundance. There are 312 many water springs, but no fountains made of stone. In the town of Aquaxumo, where the Queens Saba and Candacia were, there are many wells and tanks made with good masonry.

532 In the town of Aquaxumo there are images very well made, and figures of lions and dogs, and oxen, and other antiquities made of stone. In this town Queen Candacia became a Christian by the advice of her eunuch, whom St. Philip baptized by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

491 [563] In all this country there is no bridge of stone or of wood; in no part of the kingdoms or lordships of Prester John are there Jews. There are infinite quantities of sugar canes, 137 and they do not know how to make it; grapes and peaches are ripe in the month of February and end in April: there are many oranges, lemons and citrons, and few pot herbs, because they do not plant them.

136 Animals, namely lions, ounces, tigers, wolves, deer, antas,[1] wild cows, foxes, lynxes,[2] wild boars, porcupines, civet cats, roedeer, gazelles, elephants, and other animals not known to us, of which the country is full, except two which I never saw there, namely bears and rabbits.

Birds, partridges of three kinds, like ours, other fowls

[1] *Anta* is a South American animal. [2] Probably hyænas.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

ning of a reign; which she could not do, until one of the nobles supplied her with a sum of money. There were only a few derims left in the treasury. 792

Abyssinian Harvests. They first sow barley from the end of April to the beginning of May, or later; that is, towards the first rains. This ripens in the rains in June; and is carried off the fields into the house, that it may not rot. Then they sow fitches, which likewise ripen in the rains after. In September they sow wheat, or teff, which is cut down in December; and, if they have water, they sow barley, or fitches, again in January. In Woggora (a very fertile province), there is seed-time, and harvest, and plowing, in every month in the year; water being easily diverted to the grounds. The rent paid to the king for the ground is one-tenth of what they reap, yet, with all this, they are all poor; for a harvest, at a medium, is about twenty after one; and they sometimes, nay, very often, scarce reap the seed. They never manure the ground; and there are great quantities of rats, and innumerable ants, that consume their corn at different, nay, at all periods of its growth. All their five harvests do not, in produce, equal one Egyptian one; and they are at five times the labour. In the several villages, living, in general, is very miserable; and, in general, people of consideration scarcely know any other diet than teff bread and bouza. [511] [262] Whether this teff is black, or white, is the whole difference between the diet of master and servant. 241 ●

Abyssinian Dress. The principal part of the dress of the natives is a large cotton cloth, 24 peek (cubits) in length, and one and a half in breadth, with a blue and yellow stripe round the bottom of it. This blue is not dyed; but the Surat blue cloths are unravelled and woven for this purpose; and the yellow they dye with sûf, the yellow thistle. The best for ordinary wear costs 10 salts, or 1¼ pataka, about 6s. 6d. English. It is called Kuara, as probably coming from that province. They are very beautiful and light. The other pieces of dress are breeches, which reach to their mid-thighs; and girt with a white girdle of cloth to the common people; but the better sort have red Indian cotton cloths for breeches; and silk, or worsted coloured girdles from the Levant. When they ride, they only hold their stirrups between their great and [435] 291 492

[p. 45]

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

here there is no Domesday Book to give a clear point of departure and none of the successive unravellings of generations of scholars to help the inquirer. Any attempt at the simplification of the evidence must to some extent be a distortion.

Two preliminary generalizations may help to clarify the picture.

Firstly it is important to remember that in Ethiopia, as in all economically backward countries where industry is negligible, almost all material wealth was the direct produce of the herdsman or the man who worked on the land with his plough and his hoe.

Ethiopia shared with the rest of tropical Africa a primitive peasant agriculture; the difference was that there stood upon this basis a large hierarchical structure of government. This meant that the cultivator must, as the Ethiopians themselves express it, 'carry upon his shoulders' all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor; all his officials, central and provincial, great and small; the vast hierarchy of the church and the large armies of soldiers. As a result of the undeveloped economy and communications of Ethiopia, the services of the agriculturalist had for the most part to be used directly by the contribution of part of the crops or cattle from his own land or by the use of his labour upon that of another. While slave labour was widely used for domestic purposes, especially in the houses of the rich, it was not in the north used very extensively in the fields, and the main support of Ethiopian state and society was not the slave but the theoretically free cultivator, the *gabar*. The elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations represent only the different means by which his services and produce were utilized by the government and by other classes. It was not the land but the labour of the *gabars* on the land which provided the support for provincial as well as imperial administration. Hence the importance of the forms of tenure and tribute.

The word *gabar* has been used as a term of reproach against Ethiopia. At the end of these chapters on the provinces the reader will be in a better position to judge how far this charge was just, and especially how far it accumulated evil association by the forms it assumed in the conquered south. Here the position of the northern *gabar* must be defined in its simplest terms. In theory and, at its best, in practice, the status was not synonymous with slavery or even with oppression. Literally it means one who pays *gibr* or tribute. 'There is no shame in the word "gabbar"' was the general Ethiopian opinion recorded by an observant British consul.[1] As tribute was in theory based upon land

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5 •
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

I

INTRODUCTION

AMHARA TRADITION AND ETHIOPIA'S MODERNIZATION

THE FACT OF AMHARA DOMINANCE

Of the many traditions which are alive in the empire of Ethiopia—those of the nomadic Danakil and the sedentary Wollamo, the hippopotamus-eating Woyto and the ensete-eating Gurage, the age-graded Konso and the patrilineal Somali, the Judaic Falasha and the Muslim Bani 'Amer, and many others—clearly the dominant tradition is that of the people known throughout history to the outside world as the Abyssinians. Living on the temperate highland massif in the northern and central regions of the country, these people have gained their subsistence through the plow cultivation of cereal grains, have organized their polity as a feudal kingdom, and have remained steadfast in their Monophysite Christian faith since its introduction to the land in the fourth century.

The Abyssinians comprise two linguistic and geographical groups—the Amhara and the Tigre.* The Tigre inhabit the northern part of Ethiopia, above the Takazzē River; their lands fall in what are now the province of Tigre and the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Their language, Tigrinya, is

* Abyssinians object to the term "Abyssinian," since it has been used pejoratively by foreigners, even though they do use its indigenous counterpart, *"Hābashā,"* among themselves. The term apparently derives from the name of one of the South Arabian tribes which migrated to Ethiopia in antiquity—the Habashat. In deference to this objection, I shall use the compound "Amhara-Tigre" in place of "Abyssinian" wherever feasible. The name "Ethiopia" will be used consistently to refer to the national polity which, throughout its history, has included other peoples and traditions as well as the Amhara-Tigre.

1, [The Abyssinians, composed of Amhara and Tigre--Analyst]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sea level. It is surrounded by three rings of high mountains, which afforded military protection in times past and today provide handsome scenery. Only toward the south is a direct land route alluring, as the ridge descends toward the fertile plains of Dambiyā and the waters of Ṭānā, largest lake in Ethiopia.

Because of its intermediate altitude, Gondar escapes the chill of higher regions and the intense sun of the lowlands: its climate is among the most pleasant in Ethiopia. Water is supplied by two streams—the Angarab and the Qīha—which enclose the town, then flow together down to Lake Ṭānā twenty-one miles away. Adequate rains throughout the year assure two, some-

TABLE 1

THE HOUSES OF GONDAR AND MANZ

Gondarine Emperors Who Ruled with Full Power		The Line of Independent Shoan Rulers		
Name	Dates of Reign	Name	Highest Rank Attained	Dates of Reign
Fāsil (Fāsiladas)	1632–67	Nagāssi (Nagāssē Krīstos)	Abēto	169?–1703
Yohānnes I (the Pious)	1667–82	Sebstē (Sebstyānos)	Marīdāzmātch	1705–20
Iyāsu I (the Great)	1682–1706	Abbīyē	Marīdāzmātch	1720–45
Takla Hāymānot I	1706–8	Amhāyas (Amhā Iyasus)	Marīdāzmātch	1745–75
Tēwoflos	1708–11	Asfā Wassan	Marīdāzmātch	1775–1808
Yostos	1711–16	Wassan Sagad	Rās	1808–13
Dāwit III (the Singer)	1716–21	Sāhla Selassie	Negus	1813–47
Bakāffā (the Inexorable)	1721–30	Haile Malakot	Negus	1847–55
Iyāsu II (the Little)	1730–55	***	***	***
		Menelik II		
		As ruler of Shoa	Negus	1865–89
		As emperor of Ethiopia	Negusa Nagast	1889–1913

times three, crops in the hinterland. Ṭēff and other grains, oilseed, honey, and livestock are produced in abundance.

The population of Gondar approached seventy thousand during the city's time of power.[5] Thereafter it declined to but a few thousands. The townspeople of Gondar have been chiefly traders, priests, scribes, soldiers, artisans, and drink-house proprietresses. Like the inhabitants of Aksum, they are more conscious of Ethiopian history than people elsewhere in the country, as well they might be.

Gondar was founded by Emperor Fāsil about 1635. Legend says that he was inspired to plant his capital there because of a prophecy that Ethiopia would attain its greatest power if its capital were established in a place whose name began with the syllable *Go*. More practical considerations were surely

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

[MANZ]

29 / *The Legacy of Manz and Gondar*

The history and customs of Manz are more obviously related to its geography than is the case with Gondar. The encircling wall of mountains has been a source of isolation and protection, two factors of great moment in the history of the area. Peculiar eating and clothing habits have developed in response to a climate which, owing to the altitude of Manz and its position at the edge of an escarpment that leads down to a desert of the Rift Valley, is one of the coldest in Ethiopia. The temperature often approaches the freezing point, and in the colder months (October and November) standing in the sunshine at high noon is no defense against a shrill wind that pierces the bones.

Barley is the only crop that thrives in the highest parts of Manz, though wheat, beans, peas, and chick-peas grow in the slightly lower altitudes. But *tēff*, the grain preferred by Abyssinians for the preparation of their staple food —a kind of pancake known as *ǐnjarā*—cannot be cultivated at those heights, so the Manzē typically eats *ǐnjarā* made of barley.

Sheep are a major item in the Manz economy. The average farm has a herd of 100 to 150 sheep, which provide a heavy wool as well as the Manzē's favorite meat. This wool is used to make the *bānnā*, a warm blanket which is wrapped around the body and constitutes the standard dress of the Manzē. The *bānnā* distinguishes him from other Abyssinians, who wear a white cotton toga called *shammā*. Wealthier men wear the *barnos*, a tailored cape made of dark wool. Manzē wool is also used for the weaving of rugs which ornament the homes of the well-to-do.

No dyes are used in working their wool, so a crowd of Manzēs in natural-colored *bānnā* seen at a distance resembles a flock of their sheep. This is one of the touches contributing to the impressive aesthetic unity of the Manz landscape. The effect is also produced by the fact that the Manzē's house is built of stone, the same stone that is seen everywhere on the terrain; and its conical roof is made of thatch, which makes the roof look like the piles of grain in the fields. The churches are also built of stone with thatched conical roofs. Everything one sees in Manz bespeaks a harmony with the natural environment.

The cold climate of Manz is invigorating. It prevents food from spoiling quickly and discourages diseases which flourish in lower altitudes. The Manzē boasts that his climate keeps people healthy and gives them long lives, and indeed it is not uncommon to find men sprightly in their eighties and nineties. But only the hardy survive, for life there is as rugged as the land, and the people—like their landscape—are stony, bleak, and full of dark recesses.

Manz does not occupy so conspicuous a place in Ethiopian history as Gondar. Indeed, most books on Ethiopia do not even mention the area. While

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

When he has eaten and washed his hands, the children take their breakfast quickly. One or two of them then lead the remaining animals out to pasture—the cows, which have already been brought back and milked; the sheep and goats; the young draft animals. They spend the day roaming the hills with their flocks in the company of shepherds from nearby farms, unless it is harvest time when each must stay close to his family's fields where the herds feed on stalks and chaff.

The peasant leaves with his older sons or manservants for the fields. (If it is a fasting day, they go directly to work without any breakfast.) The day's activity may consist of cutting the ripe crops with a fine-toothed sickle, or threshing the harvest under the hooves of cattle and mules, or winnowing grain by tossing it up in the breeze. More often than not it will consist of plowing, virtually a year-round occupation. For each crop a field must be plowed at least twice: first to loosen the crusted soil, and then to cover up the seed that has been sown. Planting occurs in several months, the schedule varying according to region. In some regions, for example, barley, wheat, and chick-peas are sown in September and October; corn, beans, and peas in May and June; and *ṭēff* in July. In many areas a January planting is also common. The central position of plowing in the world of the Amhara peasant is shown by the fact that the word for his vocation, *ĭrshā*, literally means "plowing."

On plowing days, the wooden plow with its single iron share and the yoke are carried to the field, and the oxen are driven along with sticks and shouts. If it is sowing time, bags of seed are loaded on donkeys which join the procession. On his way to work the peasant is likely to see a neighbor at a distance and cries of "How did you spend the night?" are exchanged. At the field the team of oxen is yoked and the work begins. It lasts for about five hours, and the peasant is indeed wretched who does not have a helper with whom to take turns steering the heavy plow and cracking the whip as the oxen trace furrow after furrow.

The peasant's wife is too busy in the morning to sit down for a regular breakfast, so she takes bites of food at will as she works about the house. There is much ado in the house as she and her daughters, and perhaps maidservants, carry out a variety of chores—baking *ĭnjarā*, preparing *ṭallā*, spinning cotton, collecting dung for fuel, sweeping rubbish off the floor, carrying water from the spring, weaving straw baskets or mats. The impression of business is heightened by the chickens, which hop in and out of the house as they please, though they must be shooed away from grain drying in the sun.

Toward noon a fresh batch of pepper sauce is prepared. If the peasant is working in a distant field, his wife carries lunch out to him—or else risks being beaten with a stick. If he is not too far away he comes home for lunch, which he eats together with his wife. They talk about what each has done in

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in January. But the giant of holidays in this season is Epiphany, about a fortnight after Christmas. The holiday commemorates the baptism of Jesus; the name of the holiday, *Ṭĭmqat,* means "baptism." In preparation for Ṭĭmqat new clothes are given to children and the adults' *shammā,* grown very gray over the months, are washed in every household.

The program for Ṭĭmqat is long and complicated. At sunset on the eve of the holiday, the people don their white clothes and repair to the local church, from whence they escort the *tābot* to a place where it will spend the night—near some stream or pool. They go home for supper, and return to that site for singing and dancing until late at night. About two o'clock in the morning Mass is performed, after which quantities of *dābo* and *ṭallā* are consumed. Toward dawn, or shortly after, the clergy bless the water and sprinkle it on those assembled. Many like to bathe in the sanctified water at this time. It is the occasion for baptizing the children of syphilitic mothers and those who want to be rebaptized.

By noon on Ṭĭmqat Day a large crowd has assembled at the ritual site, those who went home for a little sleep having returned, and the holy ark is escorted back to its church in colorful procession. The clergy, bearing robes and umbrellas of many hues, perform rollicking dances and songs; the elders march solemnly with their weapons, attended by middle-aged men singing a long-drawn, low-pitched *haaa hooo;* and the children run about with sticks and games. Dressed up in their finest, the women chatter excitedly on their one real day of freedom in the year. The young braves leap up and down in spirited dances, tirelessly repeating rhythmic songs. When the holy ark has been safely restored to its dwelling-place, everyone goes home for feasting. In the meantime, the eyes of gamesome men and women have met and secret rendezvous have been arranged.

Ṭĭmqat ushers in a season of weddings, which comes to an abrupt end with the onset of the great fast before Easter. For eight long weeks, body and spirit are depressed by the heavy fasting requirements. The mood reaches a climax in the final week of Lent. Then no heavy work is allowed, and the more devout peasants go to church many times and intensify their daily schedule of prayers. Total abstinence is practiced for the forty-eight hours preceding the final Mass, performed in the middle of the night before Easter.

Gluttony follows this long deprivation. It is a season of the highest spirits. For eight weeks the inexorable requirement to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is waived. The bins are full with the harvest of wheat, barley, and chick-peas. New crops of pulse start to appear in the fields. It is the most favored time of all for weddings.

And then, as the Amhara themselves view it, June brings another time of sadness. With the onset of the heavy rains come attacks of malaria in the lowlands, typhus in the highlands. Swollen streams make travel difficult and

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

As for the beginning and end of the world, all Amhara believe that the world was created at one time by the will of God. When the eighth millennium arrives, moreover (A.D. 2508), God will bring about a major upheaval, either destroying the world completely or, as others believe, turning it upside down. According to the latter view, all those who live at that time will perish, while those who died first in the world's history will return to life, to a time of renewal, when a little grain will go a long way and the milk of one cow will nourish a multitude.

The Amhara peasant's view of nature is matter-of-fact. There are a few traces of animism, such as the association of certain kinds of trees with holy places and the belief that whatever is planted on the monthly commemoration of Christ's birth will dry up and die. There are a few touches of aesthetic appreciation, such as the peasant's wonderment over a remarkable view when it is thrust upon him and his desire, when feasible, to locate his home in an attractive locale. But there is certainly no idealization, religious or secular, of the great outdoors. The peasant much prefers to get out of the bright sunshine and rest in the dark, smoky interior of his hut. When he sits gazing over the hills and slopes of his gorgeous country, he is probably counting his livestock or noticing how the grain is growing.*

The Amhara peasant's life is so much a part of nature that he does not view it as a separate category of experience; there is no word for "nature" in his vocabulary. Nor is there a sense that the things of nature have minds or laws of their own. Nature is simply the passive agent of God's rewards and punishments; for example, the man who fails to keep the Orthodox fasts will find that his crops are ruined.

For his part, the peasant's adjustment to nature is a straightforward practical one. He has no drive to conquer or to be master over nature; he has no inclination to fuse or lose himself in nature; he has no need to keep nature in equilibrium through a system of rituals. His perception of natural objects is in terms of what will assist or hinder eking out a subsistence. The farm animals are his friends, and must be taken care of properly or else they will die and he will be without their help. The wild beasts are his enemies, and they must be guarded against or else they will eat his crops, his livestock, or himself. The fields must be plowed at the right time each year or the bins will become empty, and knowing the right time depends upon a sufficient knowledge of weather to judge the coming of the various kinds of rain.

Thus, the motif in the Amhara peasant's orientation toward nature is to get what one can out of what nature readily provides, neither neglecting one's responsibilities to keep things running as nature requires, nor inflicting any

* All the TAT respondents interpreted card No. 4, showing two men sitting on a ridge overlooking a natural panorama, in terms of taking care of the grazing animals and becoming wealthy.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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FIG. 14.—*A group of shepherds*

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FIG. 15.—*Threshing time*

[P.78-B]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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FIG. 18.—*Ten-year-old boy plowing*

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FIG. 19.—*Mother and daughter carrying water pots*

[P. 110-B]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 565 661 So long as they remain loyal, the Emperor has tended to let members of the new nobility help themselves to the spoils of office. Some of them retain the view that public office is a private possession, a reward from the emperor rather than an obligation to the nation or people, and that it is, therefore, appropriate to use governmental position primarily to help one's relatives, inflate one's ego, and multiply one's wealth.

178 565 556 [241] [455] For the new nobility, however, wealth is no longer measured primarily in terms of land and cattle, but of money. If they own land, it is of interest chiefly as a source of income, and they tend to prefer using it for cash crops like coffee and *çhat* (a narcotic plant sold in quantities to Arabs) than for the traditional grains and pulse or for experimental crops. They prefer to speculate in real estate rather than to increase the output of their farmlands. Indeed, because of the heightened prestige of money, many officials have been grateful—or would be grateful—for the opportunity to leave government service and become entrepreneurs. They feel very close to that small number of Ethiopians outside the government who have acquired much wealth through commercial enterprise, and who may also be included in the status group of the new nobility.

178 565 556 472 [175] [648] Commercial entrepreneurs came into prominence on the Ethiopian scene in the 1920's, when monopolies in alcohol, matches, salt, and tobacco, as well as trade in coffee and skins, enabled a small number of Ethiopian families, Christian as well as Muslim, to accumulate wealth. Such people became prisoners of their wealth during the occupation, since they felt obliged to collaborate with the Italians in order to protect their privileges. Many more Ethiopians have profited from the modest economic activity in the country since the liberation, although most of Ethiopia's trade remains in the hands of Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians (at least nominally). Their social level approximates that of the higher government officials. They are expected to pay their respects at court along with the *makuännent* and *bäla-seltän*. They [662] are often related to high government officials, and attempt to make use of their relatives in office to help them secure commercial advantages. Above all, they share the same style of life.

178 565 369 177 [556] As an urban group, the new nobility enjoy a style of life notably different from that of their predecessors who lived on mountainous estates and in army tents. Even if assigned to provincial posts, members of the new nobility tend to maintain homes in Addis Ababa. They have been quick to incorporate the more conventional urban Western forms of conspicuous consumption. Automobiles and chauffeurs, expensive European clothes, modern houses, Scotch whiskey, and Western-style banquets and dances have become the common ingredients of their subculture.

178 565 554 At the same time, traditional symbols of prestige are still in evidence. The

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent.* By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger.* It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

Ṭajj• has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *ĭnjarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman.*‡

• *Ṭajj,* it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Ĭnjarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

PREFACE

121 This dissertation describes the medical beliefs and practices of an Amhara population of northwestern Ethio-
114 pia. The field research upon which it is based was con-
131 ducted from January to December, 1966, in the highland area of Begemder province that extends from Gorgora, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, to Debark, overlooking
101 the Takassie valley (see Map 3). This region is occupied
144 by four ethnic groups, the Amhara, Abyssinian Muslims,
197 Falasha (Abyssinian Jews), and Agaw (former pagans). All
131 are racially indistinguishable from one another, and speak a common language, Amharic. North of the Takassie River live the Tigre, a people closely related to the Amhara and, like the latter, Coptic Christians.

101 The Amhara, who are the most numerous of Begemder's peoples, also inhabit much of the highland plateau extend-
231 ing to the south, into Gojam and Shoa provinces, and to
241 the east, into Wollo province. Most Amhara are rural folk who practice a mixed agricultural economy, gorwing grains
621 and pulses; raising sheep, goats, and cattle. The Amhara
632 countryside is divided into parishes. A parish is composed of several hamlets whose residents live on dispersed homesteads, and share important social and econo-
369 mic ties through their parish's church. In addition to these rural folk, Amhara constitute a majority among the townspeople of highland Begemder.

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Begemder

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779 their combined ranks the political elite of Ethiopia has been historically recruited. Third among the highland peoples are the Agaw. It appears likely that they are the descendants of the original Hamitic population of this region, and only during the last century have most Begemder Agaw been converted from their indigenous religious beliefs to membership in the Coptic Church. Within Begemder, they constitute a majority of the inhabitants of three non-contiguous areas. Fourth among highlanders are the rural Muslims, indigenous people who have been converted to Islam over the last five centuries.

[241] While the rural Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw are exclusively
[463] farmers, these Muslims divide their energies between farm-
[286] ing and working as artisans, mainly weavers of the toga
[443] cloth; Muslim women are prominant among the traders of
[562] the weekly markets held throughout the province. Least numerous of the highland people are the Falasha, Abyssin-
[423] ian Jews following a Mosaic creed. A despised and humil-
[326] iated people, the Falasha farm only rented fields
[286] (timene), and work as smiths as well as weavers; Falasha
[162] women are potters. Although the Falasha are localized in several regions, they nowhere constitute a majority
[361] of an area's residents. Like the Abyssinian Muslims, they reside either in hamlets of their own, apart from Amhara, or in peripheral homesteads of otherwise Christian hamlets. These distributions are summarized in Map2.

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621 into sixty-five named wards (sebekas). The social and demographic character of wards varies considerably, and it is useful to describe them in terms of two contrasting types. At one extreme, the ward resembles a kind
• [241] of urban parish. It contains an eponymous Church; and
[423] a majority of residents are ristenas, members of land-owning ambilineages who support themselves by farming and renting homesteads on their lands. But even these wards contrast with rural parishes on several counts.
*[892] The ward is generally compact in size, and internally
[463] undivided beyond the homestead (bet). Within it live out-landers who work outside the ward in exclusively non-agricultural occupations. Further, while the parish is administered in detail by residents, the ward relies upon non-resident agents of the municipality for its administration.

At the other extreme, are the town's "non-corporate"
[648] wards. During the Italian occupation, several of
[175] Gondar's parish-like wards were sequestered by the invaders as building sites. After liberation, the Imperial government divided each of these wards into tracts, which were deliniated according to the buildings upon them. Tracts were then given as grants (yaribena mariet, "hero's land") to supporters of the government-in-exile, who were often non-residents of Gondar. In time, the pre-war boundaries of such wards were no longer regarded

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621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talla sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivators of timene and church lands (riym). During the [178] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [241] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibañas, eight as wood cutters,

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holds (73% of the total) are without kinship ties to any other of the ward's households. Although many of these residents have kinsmen in other parts of Gondar, few have more than one or two relatives in the town. In addition, because most townfolk rely upon non-agricultural employment for their subsistence needs, there is a concomitant disinterest in ambilineage fields. A consequence is a weakening of the important economic bonds which otherwise link kinsmen to one another.

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Kinship ties are an important means by which the peasant acquires and communicates information necessary for constructing herbalist chains. Since almost every herbalist therapy of the rural parish enjoys its own "pedigree", or trans-generational reputation, the peasant herbalist is provided with means for 1) publicly validating his therapeutic claims, and 2) communicating the existence of the therapy to his potential clients. Potential clients frequently associate the ownership of a famous herbalist therapy with the members of a specific ambilineage, often identifiable by name. Both the ambilineage (whose identity is linked to its fields) and its medical reputation (which is tied to the ambilineage) are attached to a particular location. Since residence is most often viripatrilocal, the transmission of such therapeutic reputations is characterized by an agnatic bias. The male therapist moving to town, like

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as a means for diousing and strengthening a risteña family's economic and social interests within the parish. There are two conspicuous exceptions. Should a boy bear a physical disability so severe that he will be unable to perform the basic subsistence activities of Amhara men, particularly plowing, he may be enrolled in the parish school as a prelude to a non-agricultural career beyond his natal parish. The alternatives are few. Work as an artisan is appropriate for Muslim and Falasha, but shameful for an Amhara; while employment as a merchant is less objectionable, the peasant is generally without the necessary skills, contacts, and capital; military service is beyond his abilities; thus, only the Church and government remain. Regarding the Church, the priesthood is closed to him, since a priest must be physically whole, and capable of standing unassisted during the performance of the Mass. The remaining ecclesiastical and government career choices assume that a boy will achieve literacy at the parish school and subsequently depart from his natal community. The second exception to the local focus of the parish school, is the small number of boys who are offspring of debtera-teachers serving in parish churches. The ties of these men to their parishes-of-residence are usually only professional, and they are rarely risteñas, it is moreover their professional ethos which influences them to seek an extensive

tection against ganels (but as a category of agents, rather than as named individuals), against the shifta bandit, and against the wild animals of the lowlands. The prophylactic abinet that he acquires, although short on asmat, perhaps lacking telsem, and with few magical features of manufacture, he works into kitabs. While the student's initial stimulus for collecting these abinet is his own immediate needs, he is nonetheless aware of the commercial value of such abinet, in the form of commercial services for lowland peasants.

Relatively few experienced debteras pay visits to the kola lands. The lowlands, considered unhealthful and dangerous by highlanders in general, are still less appealing to the mature debtera. He deprecates them for the absence of ecclesiastical establishments, and fears them for what he believes to be the shifta's predilection for robbing and murdering debteras.[27] In lieu of more expert services, and attracted by the moderate costs, the lowlander is often anxious to purchase kitabs from visiting students. The students, in anticipation, prepare a score or more of kitabs before traveling to the lowlands;

[27] Debteras attribute the shifta's murderousness to his fear of subsequent magical revenge by the debtera.